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As four national organizations relating to the post-secondary institutions in which the majority of foreign students are enrolled, we are pleased to respond to the Committee's request to appear together to discuss the place of foreign students in Canada's international relations. We are pleased to appear together because we agree, not only on the value of receiving foreign students, but also on the changes which are necessary to improve a situation which has deteriorated badly over the past decade. In this presentation, we will highlight our main points, and invite members to ask questions and to comment on the issues as they have been outlined in our several briefs.

There has been general agreement for many years on the values attached to receiving foreign students:

1. The education and training which foreign students receive in Canada develop personal and professional links which endure long after the students return home, and have important effects on relations between our countries;
2. Their presence enhances the quality of education experienced by Canadian students because of the contact with other peoples and cultures which they represent; this benefit accrues as well to local communities;
3. Foreign students have helped maintain and develop Canadian research and development capacity, especially in science and engineering;
4. The foreign exchange which these students bring with them contributes to local service economies, especially in smaller centres.

Although our federal and provincial governments have declared their recognition of these values, our actions in the past decade have been confusing. Increased support for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan encourages the flow of Commonwealth students into Canada while high differential tuition fees discourage such an inflow. The attractiveness of higher education in Canada is reduced by restrictions on employment and the absence of scholastic support schemes for the majority of international students no matter what their academic excellence; and divided jurisdictions in the areas of health, education and taxation create innumerable petty problems for individuals with little time or energy to spare. In our own way, we are repeating the disastrous British experiment and driving away students by taking unilateral actions for which our friends abroad can see little justification. By contrast, the Japanese who have no tradition of receiving foreign students are making great efforts to increase

the number of foreign students in Japan, while at the same time fostering better understanding of Japan in Canada through increased funding to Japanese studies. Indeed, given our interest in cultivating increased trade with the Pacific Rim, we have done surprisingly little to develop our own expertise in the languages, cultures or economies of those nations or to encourage useful scholarly and cultural contacts.

Our allies in the OECD countries also recognize the importance of student reception policies in the context of international economic affairs and peace and security issues, as do the USSR and its allies. These countries, as well as those of the developing South, are equally concerned about this human link in their international relations as they send their students abroad.

We can point to two chief causes of Canada's problems internationally in the area of student mobility:

1. the mass of rules and regulations which have grown over the years without coordination or planning, and which are administered haphazardly as a result;
2. the absence of coordination and consultation between federal and provincial governments.

Our experience over the past decade has demonstrated that existing mechanisms are not able to consolidate the issues surrounding foreign student policy, much less resolve problems. A province will raise tuition fees for foreign students with no notice to immigration authorities, who then are criticized at home and abroad for exacting exorbitant sums from students wishing entry. The federal government grants students admission to canada, but then takes no responsibility for their general welfare once they have arrived, leaving any problems to be resolved by educational institutions which fall under provincial jurisdiction. The context for taking remedial action is agonizingly confused for our organizations and members.

A national foreign student policy is necessary. The experience of foreign students in Canada is directly affected by federal laws and policies governing our relations with other countries, including scholarship and exchange programs, development aid activities, and immigration targets and objectives.

We therefore urge this Committee to recommend to Parliament that foreign student policy be placed as a matter of priority on the agenda of the next meeting of First Ministers.

The agenda for this meeting must include devising a practicable resolution to the problem of differential fees, and developing mechanisms for arriving at fairness and consistency in the application of laws and regulations. High tuition fees are not only driving away students, but are creating a negative image of Canada abroad as a country which begrudges sharing its knowledge and cares little for the efforts of others to maintain international links in order to develop through their most precious resource - their young people. Regulations governing employment, taxation, residency and health insurance have created a web of suspicion, resentment and disbelief among foreign students which durably affects their attitude to, and perception of, the Canadian way of doing things.

Despite the gloom surrounding our individual and collective briefs, we are encouraged by recent developments. Canada has increased its support to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and has announced further scholarship support to "la francophonie". Several provinces have held back from full implementation of their originally announced fee policies. The Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission has begun a process of simplifying some regulations, and of consulting inside and outside the government before considering changes. We hope the report of this Committee will bolster this trend.

Finally, we urge the Committee to remember that Canada's reception of students from abroad is only one facet of our international, cultural and educational relations. More opportunities to encourage Canadians to go abroad must be made available, and wider distribution of information be made about existing opportunities.

Exchange, whether of goods, people or ideas must always be a two-way street, easily travelled in both directions. Both activities make an important contribution to the general objectives of Canada's international relations: developing diversified trading links, and promoting global peace and security.

The briefs submitted by each of our organizations speak to these points, and offer a variety of means to address them. We look forward to discussing them with you.